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Introduction

Seattle's Vision

The City of Seattle has a bold vision – Seattle will become a community where domestic violence does not exist. It will be a place where people embrace nonviolence and equality in all domestic relationships. The City's Domestic Violence Prevention Council, as an inter-departmental body of City leaders responsible for City policy and programs, provides the leadership, on- ongoing oversight, and coordination in the City's efforts to eliminate domestic violence. It accepts the reality that to end domestic violence will require a multi-faceted approach including:

- Primary prevention efforts to change community norms about what constitutes healthy intimate partner relationships;
- Crisis services such as confidential shelters and advocacy to help victims and their children who live in dangerous situations gain safety;
- Interventions by the criminal justice system to protect victims of domestic violence and to hold batterers accountable; and
- Other services and supports such as training and employment, affordable child care, affordable housing, and affordable legal services to help domestic violence victims extricate themselves permanently from abusive relationships and rebuild their lives.

Due to the complexity of domestic violence, the City remains committed to working closely with businesses, schools, health care, media, faith communities, collegiate and professional sports, grassroots organizations and family networks to reject domestic violence in all of its forms.

Over the past decade, Seattle has taken consistent steps to work towards the reduction of domestic violence. This plan builds upon these early efforts. It addresses the City of Seattle's criminal justice response to domestic violence and proposes new approaches and policies, based on best practice evidence, for incorporation in the City's work against domestic violence.

Seattle's First Domestic Violence Strategic Plan

The City's first domestic violence strategic plan was launched in 1998 and provided the first major step toward creating an integrated municipal response to domestic violence in Seattle. The plan identified numerous service gaps. Many of these gaps were subsequently addressed with new programs and strategies. These included:

- A City workplace domestic violence policy (how to recognize it among coworkers and deal with it), an education campaign and the production of "Sweet Resolutions," a presentation emphasizing the theme that domestic violence doesn't stay at home, it also comes to work;
- A Police Department Victim Support Team (which currently includes 75 trained volunteers who are on call to respond to victims on-scene);
- An initiative to improve apprehension of fugitive domestic violence offenders;
- Initiation of the Seattle/King County Firearms Forfeiture Project to remove firearms from misdemeanor batterers;
- Initiation of the Victim Defendant Project that explores the growing trend in the arrest of battered victims who are defending themselves against physical violence;
- Media outreach through Op-Ed series and City Council community forums;
- Additional City funds for domestic violence advocacy service system;
- Research on effectiveness of protection orders;
- Research on barriers for ethnic and hard to serve populations;



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- Grant funding secured for criminal justice enhancements including firearm forfeiture, surrender and seizure, intensive probation supervision, best practices training for law enforcement, legal advocacy services for felony domestic violence cases, and translations of system brochures; and
- Grant funding secured for social service system enhancements including hotel vouchers for shelter, community advocates, community legal advocates, language advocates, and translations of agency brochures.

Seattle's Second Domestic Violence Strategic Plan

Over a two year period, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Office conducted a comprehensive assessment of Seattle's domestic violence response, with a focus on the criminal justice system. The information provided in the assessment is used to develop this second strategic plan.

The Seattle Domestic Violence Assessment was released in December 2003. It includes ten separate reports, eight of which refer to specific criminal justice areas. The other two relate to survivor services when there are language and cultural barriers, and community attitudes. Specifically, the reports are:

1. Domestic Violence Cases in the Seattle Police Department.
2. Patrol Response to Domestic Violence in Seattle, Washington: Text Analysis of Seattle Police Department Incident Reports.
3. A Report from the 2003 Domestic Violence Safety and Accountability Audit: Prosecution Response to Misdemeanor Domestic Violence Cases.
4. A Report on Domestic Violence Cases in Seattle Municipal Court.
5. A Report on the Domestic Violence Unit, Seattle Municipal Court Probation.
6. Removing Firearms from Domestic Violence Perpetrators.
7. Victim-Defendants: An Emerging Challenge in Responding to Domestic Violence in Seattle and the King County Region.
8. Summary Reports and Findings of Seattle's Domestic Violence Assessment.
9. Multi-lingual Access Project (MAP): Report Highlights.
10. Healthy Relationships/Healthy Communities: A Community Forum Series on Domestic Violence.

While the Assessments contain over 80 recommendations or opportunities for enhancements, it identified eight for immediate action. They are:

1. Police should improve on-scene investigation, documentation and follow-up of domestic violence incidents by improving training, performance expectations, policies and procedures.
2. Police and the City Attorney should jointly develop policies and procedures for arresting offenders who are gone when police arrive on the scene.
3. Police, the City Attorney and the Seattle Municipal Court should remove firearms from convicted domestic violence misdemeanants.
4. The City Attorney should develop domestic violence policies that guide day-to-day prosecutorial activities and include links with police. Written guidelines should be established for screening cases to help advocates and prosecutors balance safety with evidence.
5. The Municipal Court should strengthen policies and procedures for processing domestic violence cases.
6. The criminal justice system should place new emphasis on helping children in domestic violence incidents. Protocols need to be developed for documenting and helping children at the crime scene, and addressing their safety.
7. The criminal justice system should create comprehensive victim advocacy services, from initial police contact to case adjudication.



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8. The Domestic Prevention Violence Council should establish a working committee to oversee implementation of the Assessment's recommendations.

These eight recommendations form the backbone of this second Strategic Plan which focuses on criminal justice areas.

Over the last decade many substantial improvements have been made in Seattle's domestic violence criminal justice response; nonetheless, the City will continue actions to reduce domestic violence. As it does so, it will consider growing and important new research, best practices information, and emerging issues in the domestic violence field.

This Domestic Violence Strategic Plan, which focuses on criminal justice, continues Seattle's initial efforts to foster a focused system and promote changing the attitudes and practices within our system. By accomplishing this goal, Seattle will be able to provide more comprehensive response and assistance to those who need it.

Planning & Development Process

In April 2004, staff from the Seattle Police Department, Seattle Municipal Court, Seattle City Attorney's Office, Public Health—Seattle & King County, Mayor's Office, Finance Department and the Domestic & Sexual Violence Prevention Office of the Human Services Department, along with representatives from Seattle City Council formed the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's Assessment Committee and began intensive planning work. The committee's charge was to create a domestic violence strategic plan based on the recommendations of the 2003 Domestic Violence Assessment. Members brought their collective expertise and efforts to the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) for discussion and clarification. The end result of the Assessment Committee's work and the DVPC's deliberations is this strategic plan.

Initially, the Assessment Committee members reviewed the findings and recommendations of the 2003 Domestic Violence Assessment. Based on this review, members identified eight key issues for the strategic plan: 1) Advocacy and Victim Services, 2) Batterers' Intervention, 3) Firearms, 4) Investigations, 5) Prosecution Plan, 6) Sanctions, 7) Special Populations, and 8) Victim Defendants.

The Assessment Committee then formed work teams for each of these issues. These included departmental staff and, in some cases, community partners (See page 2 for list of issue groups). Each team drafted an introduction that provides a brief overview and the action plan for the issue.

Once the Domestic Violence Prevention Council approved the discussion draft of the plan at its December 2004 meeting, conversations with community partners and stakeholders began in earnest in early January of 2005. Staff made the plan available online. In addition, working closely with the King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence (KCCADV), 22 different community groups and programs were contacted to see if they wanted to participate in a briefing and conversation about the plan and/or submit their comments. Six groups chose to respond electronically. The Domestic & Sexual Violence Prevention Office and/or KCCADV staff met with another 15 groups, including:

- **Batterer's Intervention Providers;**
- **Child Protective Services Domestic Violence Collaboration Group** (comprised of King County Public Health and Child Protective Services of the Department of Social and Health Services [DSHS]);
- **City of Seattle's Criminal Justice Collaboration Group** (comprised of City Attorney advocate and prosecution staff, probation and clerical staff, and the Gender and Age Crimes Unit of the Seattle Police Department);



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- **Court and Community Advocates** (under the auspices of the VAWA STOP grant);
- **Elder Abuse Council** (comprised of professionals from the Attorney General's Office, the Crisis Clinic, DSHS Adult Protective Services and Residential Care Services, DSHS Senior Services, the King County Sheriff's Office, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Seattle Human Services Department's Aging and Disability Services, Seattle Police Department, Virginia Mason Clinic and the University of Washington's School of Nursing);
- **King County Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Unit;**
- **King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence;**
- **King County Domestic Violence Prevention Council's Coordinating Committee** (comprised of King County Prosecuting Attorneys and Advocates, the King County Department of Judicial Administration's DV Coordinator, the King County Sheriff's Office, the King County Women's Program and a representative of the King County Work First Program, King County Department of Public Health);
- **Public Defense Attorneys** (from 4 different agencies and a representative of the Washington Criminal Defense Lawyers and the Director of the King County Office of Public Defense);
- **Strategic Management Team of Seattle's Human Services Department;**
- **Seattle Women's Commission;** and
- **Four different groups of survivors of domestic violence.**

The community overall was very impressed by the magnitude and aggressive nature of this plan and applauded the City for its efforts to end domestic violence in our community. Each group provided excellent feedback for consideration by the Assessment Committee as it developed the final version of the Strategic Plan. While many of the observations tended to focus on the implementation phase, others have resulted in modifications to the plan.

Next Steps

Over the years, Seattle has made great strides in developing and executing a coordinated community response to domestic violence. The 2003 Domestic Violence Assessment has helped the City identify areas of strengths, as well as opportunities for enhancements with respect to our criminal justice system.

The development and execution of the City's response has involved many stakeholders, from criminal justice personnel to providers of domestic violence services and interested community residents. The City's response has also taken into consideration the rich diversity of our community. For example, the City has supported, through grant funds, a community-driven effort, called the Multi-Lingual Access Project, to improve access to domestic violence services for limited English and non-English speakers. With this strategic plan, which describes the next steps in the City's efforts to improve its response to domestic violence, with respect to the criminal justice system, the City continues to embrace a collaborative approach with respect to implementation. Successful implementation of this plan will require the continued involvement of the many -- government and other stakeholders representing various populations -- who are committed to responding to domestic violence.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Council's (DVPC) Criminal Justice Committee, which may include providers and other members of the community, will oversee the plan's implementation. Implementation also involves a number of efforts for coordination and community involvement. Examples include: the criminal justice/community-based advocacy roundtable, the involvement of batter intervention (BI) stakeholders in the analysis of current BI practice and the results of such practice, a workgroup to develop protocol for documenting the presence of children and other special populations at a domestic violence crime scene, and a number of legislative efforts.



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Even upon adoption by the DVPC and the City Council, this plan will remain a living document, a work in progress. Therefore, the Criminal Justice Committee will facilitate the development of a plan update for 2007 to address any new or emerging issues and publish information to inform our stakeholders and interested parties of progress.



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Plan Overview

We know from experience that to end violence in domestic relationships requires a multifaceted, coordinated approach that builds upon the expertise of the various criminal justice agencies and their partners within city government and the community. The City's criminal justice system already has key components of a coordinated system in place:

- Seattle Police Department's Gender and Age Crime Investigations Section, a specialized unit of detectives to investigate domestic violence related felonies and misdemeanors;
- Seattle Police Department's Victim Support Team, a cadre of volunteers and staff who respond to the needs of domestic violence victims;
- Seattle City Attorney's Office's Domestic Violence Unit that coordinates victim advocacy and prosecution services for misdemeanor domestic violence cases;
- Domestic Violence Unit in the Seattle Municipal Court's Probation Services Department, which supervises misdemeanor offenders; and
- Seattle Municipal Court's newly established Domestic Violence Court, in which one judge or a team of judges hear all domestic violence cases of the same defendant from arraignment through probation reviews.

These criminal justice agencies working closely together and with other City- and community-based agencies have developed some innovative approaches to responding to domestic violence.

This Strategic Plan on Seattle's Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence continues the systemic approach to enhancing the City of Seattle's criminal justice response to domestic violence. That is, it targets specific areas that involve or impact more than one agency within the system. The issues include: 1) Advocacy and Victim Services, 2) Batterer Intervention, 3) Firearms, 4) Investigations, 5) Prosecution Plan, 6) Sanctions, 7) Special Populations, and 8) Victim Defendants. The desired result of the plan is systemic change that contributes significantly to making the City even safer, services more accessible, particularly for women and their children, batterers more accountable, and families stronger. During the next five years, Seattle will work towards the following enhancements of its coordinated criminal justice response to domestic violence:

- A comprehensive City victim advocacy service plan that includes community advocacy and service linkages;
- A more effective batterer intervention policy;
- An enhanced police response to children, seniors and vulnerable adults at the scene of a domestic violence related incident;
- Improved collaboration across systems and agencies, locally and regionally, that work with special populations (i.e., children, seniors, vulnerable adults, people of color, and refugees and immigrants);
- Enhanced regional, state and federal funding, services and policies to assist those victimized by domestic violence, including members of special populations;
- Establishment of a confiscation of firearms program to remove such weapons from domestic violence offenders and individuals prohibited from possessing them due to criminal domestic violence conviction;
- Enhanced domestic violence investigations;
- Prosecution that serves the best interest of victims and their children;
- Sanctions with improved compliance, and appropriate alternatives to confinement for domestic violence offenders; and
- Improved response and service to victim defendants.



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Work on these enhancements will require a concerted effort to address 40 objectives. These objectives have been divided into “readiness and impact” groups (see tables that follow). All the objectives are deemed important, however, to determine where to target the City’s initial efforts, a number of readiness and impact factors were considered, such as the priorities of the lead Department; availability of funding; number of people, including hard to reach special populations, who may benefit from the effort; and the potential to prevent recurrence of domestic violence and change community norms. Based on factors such as these, the City will strive to initiate the following objectives in 2005:

- Clarifying the role of victim advocates within the criminal justice system;
- Implementing a new victim safety inventory tool that will be used by advocates across the City’s criminal justice system;
- Analyzing the current practice of batterer intervention in the City and the results of this practice;
- Implementing a firearm confiscation program targeting domestic violence offenders, including those convicted of criminal domestic violence;
- Implementing a High Risk Offender (HRO) program in the City Attorney’s Office;
- Standardizing sanction recommendations for original sentences and reviews;
- Assuring that policies and procedures are in place and adequate training is provided to all officers regarding officer involved domestic violence cases;
- Developing policies that align Seattle Police Department’s investigatory practices with nationally-recognized best practices;
- Continuing to provide on-going training to officers and supervisors to produce thorough investigative follow-through; and
- Developing a set of protocols for documenting and tracking the presence of children, seniors and vulnerable adults at the scene of a Domestic Violence-related incident.

As the tables that follow indicate, the goal is to complete several of these objectives in 2005. The target date for completing others is 2006 or later.

Overall, the objectives fall within one of two strategic categories, “New Services and Practices,” which are any entirely new efforts within the City of Seattle to strengthen the coordinated response system to domestic violence, and “Service Improvements,” which are efforts to refocus or refine existing services within the system (See pages 17 – 24 for complete list of objectives and their strategic category). Examples of objectives by strategic category for 2005 are as follows:

New Services and Practices

- Write policies to enhance the removal of firearms from batterers as prescribed by law.
- Design and write procedural steps and corresponding forms for SPD, the City Attorney’s Office and the Court to enhance the surrender, seizure and forfeiture of firearms.
- Implement High Risk Offender program.
- Standardize sanction recommendations for original sentences and reviews.

Service Improvements

- Clarify the role of victim advocate within the criminal justice system that focuses on victim safety and system accountability.
- Continue to provide on-going training to front-line officers and supervisors to produce thorough investigative follow through.
- Advocate for on-going, and increased, federal, state, and regional financial support for such services as mental health, respite care, emergency housing options, interpretive services and case



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management services to assist victims of domestic violence, including children, seniors, vulnerable adults, people of color, and refugees and immigrants.

The final section of this document sets forth the action plan, which will guide the City's implementation efforts. It reflects a well-coordinated process indicating what action needs to occur, how it will occur and which City Department will lead the implementation efforts.. This plan is a work in progress. Adjustments could be made contingent upon available resources. This plan identifies areas where new resources, beyond existing funds, may be required to implement the plan. Regardless of whether the objective or enhancement is new or a refinement of an existing service or practice, the development of new partnerships, policies, protocols and educational/training opportunities is a must for the successful implementation of this plan. With the successful implementation of this plan, the City of Seattle can make significant advances toward reducing the incidence, as well as the severity of domestic violence in our City